THE NATION

Cronkite: LBJ doubted Warren report

By Steve Marshall
USA TODAY

Former president Lyndon Johnson got CBS Chairman William Paley to delete from a TV interview his remarks questioning the Warren Commission's conclusion that a lone gunman killed President John F. Kennedy, former anchor Walter Cronkite says.

Cronkite's comments, made Wednesday to The Associated Press, came amid renewed interest in the 1963 assassination.

Oliver Stone's movie *JFK* sparked a furor with its premise that a U.S. government agency conspiracy was responsible for Kennedy's death on Nov. 22, 1963 in Dallas.

The Warren Commission concluded Lee Harvey Oswald alone killed Kennedy.

Johnson commented on that finding during an interview in 1970 — the year after he left office — for a television series on his memoirs.

"He said he'd never been sure the Warren Commission was right, that he'd always thought there was a possibility of a conspiracy in Kennedy's death," Cronkite said.

Under an agreement between Johnson and CBS News, the former president had 24 hours to have any remark he'd made deleted for broadcast.

At first, Johnson didn't object to his Warren Commission remarks, and CBS planned to air them, Cronkite said.

But when Johnson — who died in 1973 — sought their deletion several weeks later, he was told he was too late.

Johnson appealed to network founder Paley, who overruled Cronkite and the producers, Cronkite said.

Paley died in 1990.

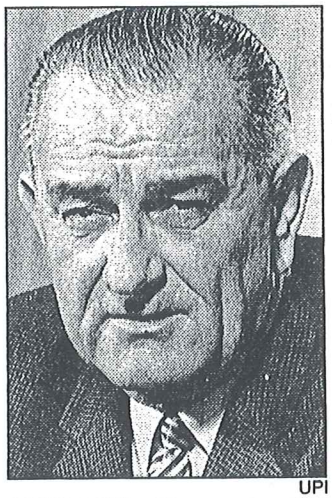
A report on Cronkite's recollection of the episode initially appeared in *Variety*, the entertainment weekly. It said Cronkite recently discussed it for a cable television documentary on the Kennedy assassination.

Another report that Johnson was skeptical of the Warren Commission findings came in a letter by former Johnson aide Joseph Califano that *The Wall Street Journal* published last week. Califano, in criticizing the movie *JFK*, said Johnson told him he believed Cuban leader Fidel Castro was responsible for the assassination and Oswald didn't act alone.

Other media reports:

▶ Television's *Inside Edition* reported Wednesday that Oswald had links to the CIA, which has denied any link. The show's Bill O'Reilly disclosed sealed reports from the House Assassination Committee.

▶ CBS's *48 Hours* Wednesday was the network's fourth prime-time show in 28 years to probe the assassination mystery. The show covered conspiracy theories and Dan Rather interviewed director Stone.



UPI

JOHNSON: Changed mind about TV interview comments